602 farm the land and use church pasturage in the valley, are often the sons of the brothers of the priest, if not his own sons--an Amhara form of nepotism.

417 231 Each hamlet is usually fenced in ("jägol"-thorny fence) against night-roving hyenas, and may contain, besides living huts and store huts, a cattle corral ("magwa") though at least the calves and the family mule are taken into the living hut at night. The kitchen garden may also have an enclosure of cut thornbushes, protection against ravages by domestic cattle; and ther usually is at least one fierce reddish-brown dog (with white underside). Solid fences of stakes fixed straight in the ground ("gäräggärä") are usually used only around churches.

632 622 While the head of each hamlet is the head of the residential, extended family, the administrative head of a series of hamlets is appointed by the governor of the province (formerly by the feudal lord). This appointed headman, chega shum (lit. "appointed one over the soil") may administer as few as two hamlets, or as many as fifty, with the mode about 8 to 10. In sparsely populated, less fertile or very mountainous territory his domain may be greater, but in most cases his area is within sight so that he can even maintain contact during the rainy season. His area is properly called "mändär" and constitutes the nearest approach to the village concept. If his territory is on church land, it is referred to as "and debber agär" (lit. land in support of a certain holy place) since very often this land has been donated for that purpose in the last will of a pious elderly landowner, and is something like parish

632
622 land. When a person is asked where he is from, he will often give the local name for his "and debber agar" of origin.

634 The cheqa shum, village headmen, are supervised by the district chief, "worada shum", who is also appointed by the

625 governor. The district chief in turn appoints his own police, called "nach lebash" (lit. "thiefcathers in white"), who wear no special uniforms, merely the usual white togas, and carry rifles, in the use of which they are expert. They are used not only against petty thieves but against more dangerous bandits also. Their efficiency is commonly regarded as far superior to that of the uniformed urban police. Usually there is one nach lebash per half-district ("mekatl worada") or two per district, unless an increase in banditry ("shifta") requires more.

651 Taxes, paid often in produce but increasingly in cash, are collected from each cheqa shum, but not by the district chief himself. For this task the governor has appointed a lieutenant, "mislane", per district ("worada"), who ranks equal with the worada shum and expects aid from the latter. Usually the mislane is a stranger to the district and himself a sort of glorified retainer and account-keeper from the court of the governor of the sub-province ("awraja") who has appointed him; while the district chief is a local man who may conspire with his village headmen to keep local prosperity from the knowledge of the governor's central office. The latter therefore has to rely on the cleverness of his lieutenants, the "mislane".

622 651 The administrative pyramid rests squarely on the shoulders of the cheqa shum. He collects local dues for

622 651 both the central government and the local church. Where the land has not been officially measured, which is the usual case in old Amhara territory, the mislane must rely on him for information necessary to the assessment of taxes. The cheqa shum is expected also to supervise customs evasion when caravans or smugglers move through his territory. He 622 692 mediates between landlord and tenant in their endless little disagreement. In fact, his activities resemble those of an Elizabethan "Justice of the Peace".

He decides local disputes, in civil cases; officiates at the most common type of marriage, the "semanya" (an agreement between two kinship groups); he reads out government proclamations and decrees of the emperor at the nearest rural market place, including the call to arms in case of war. He can also indict a criminal and bring him before the "danya" the judge of the nearest market town, or to the "judges on circuit" accompanying the governor on his annual inspection tour during the dry season. Usually the cheqa shum is 622 a local landlord himself, unless he has been given the post as a special favor for services rendered to the governor.

[701] Until the diminution of feudal privileges during the past decade, the cheqa shum was also responsible for providing the military-feudal chiefs and their troops with provisions when they were on march, making it unnecessary for [485] them to depend on supply lines. Now that army troops receive regular salaries, he still has to play host to travelling officials for their personal needs, since there are no rural hotels. They do not pay him except by promises of future favors.

1: Messing, E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 485 This change has also lightened the burden on the "gabbar", the tenant sharecropper. In the past it was the gabbar who had to supply the "feast" (called "gebber", with ironic truthfulness regarding the provider) for feudal troops on march, in addition to all his other burdens. The cheqa shum was responsible for its collection, for only he knew how much produce, goats, sheep, honey, etc., the peasant had left after the heavy sharecropping rent to the landlord and the "tithe" ("asrat") which is still payable to the central government (formerly to the district feudal lord).

651 There is now a new tax, the "education tax" payable even in rural areas where no government schools exist as yet, and payable in cash only, not in produce as in case of "asrat". This tax, too, is collected by the cheqa shum and delivered to the mislenē who must now issue a receipt and forward the money to the central treasury.

563 361 Ethnic considerations in the location of a hamlet in Amhara territory apply to hamlets of scattered Falashas, ironsmiths who observe Mosaic Judaism, and hamlets of the Faqi, Cushitic-speaking tanners who were "Pagan" but have recently accepted the Coptic faith and the Amharic language. Since their services are required, they are often permitted to rent land on a hill, the other side of which may contain a Coptic Amhara hamlet. Relations between these hamlets, beginning on strictly economic terms, often become as friendly as the difference between religions, low status of skilled smiths and tanners, and old supernatural [622] suspicions permit. In case of such residence, one cheqa shum may have an ethnic variety of hamlets under his domain, and may know far more about their "strange" inhabitants and their customs than the average Amhara.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

178 631 3. Public Administration and Territorial Organization

The social structure supported by the pillars of traditional land tenure and feudal army organization, is maintained by a third pillar, public administration and the old territorial organization. However, all three are now in process of gradual, and uneven, transition, partly resembling analogous developments in Europe at the end of the feudal Middle Ages.

A. Rural Administration

622 Much as the hierarchical pyramid of land tenure and the old army of the Amhara rested on the broad back of the "gabbar", so does rural organization still rest ultimately on the broad base of the rural official known as "cheqa shum" (lit. appointee over the soil). He might be regarded as village headman, though in view of the residential pattern of scattered hamlets ("tis"), his area includes a collection of them, collectively known as "mändär" (village). This may coincide, in the old-Amhara provinces, with the church parishes known as "ānd debber agär".

Although appointed by the governor of the province, and supervised by the intermediate district chief ("worädä gëj", or "worädä shum", or "mislanē", i.e. governor's deputy, or lieutenant), the cheqa shum is regarded as the agent of the highest administrative power, formerly the "ras" of the province; or the king ("negus"); now the emperor. In thetraditional pattern

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954) 1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 he has been able to accuse the governor himself when called before the uppermost ruler, e.g. after an unsuccessful rebellion, thus freeing himself from any involvement in the guilt. It is he who orders a crier 303 to proclaim the latest decrees of the emperor at the big marketplace within his area.

His function has been likened to those of an Elizabethan Justice of the peace, and there are indeed partial analogies. Among the duties of the ṣheqa shum are:

Proclamation of imperial decrees; including call to arms in case of war;

Officiating at weddings ("semanya", outside church) arranged between kin groups;

Presiding over the village Council of Elders(chilot);

Supervising local "gabbar" on their statute-labor and impressments;

Aiding the "mislanē" in collection of taxes;

Assisting the local priests in collection of dues on church lands;

Estimating the fertility of land, in assessments of land tax;

Mediating between landlord and tenant in case of disagreements (basing himself largely on local custom and unwritten law);

Facilitating efforts of "näch lēbash" police in pursuit of bandits (shefta);

Arresting local criminals and bringing them before the "danya"(judge) at the nearest market

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 center of town;

Acting as host to travelling officials and guests of the government (usually taking the supplies from local peasants);

Collecting government revenues on caravan trails passing through his area, especially import and export duties, and passing them on to the "nägadras" (lit. officer over commerce).

Assisting the "nägadras" in collection of various market dues, on honey, togas ("shamma"), sale of domestic animals, pottery, pepper, spices, etc., if sold at the formal market.

The cheqa shum is thus available for any additional services the central government wishes to apply to the grassroots of the population, and this perhaps explains why the position of the cheqa shum is the least changed of all traditional appointments to office.

He still receives no salary, but enjoys the traditional benefits of his office: Freedom from land tax; actual, though not legal near-freedom fromthe "asrat" produce tax; (he is freed from taxes because he is said to pay taxes "with his legs" in carrying out orders); withholding part of his collections; customary, though illegal, "kickbacks" from his activity in assessing land for taxes; small gifts for officiating at "semanya" weddings; rewards for arbitrating cases by retaining the "wager" of the loser; participating, with his household, in feasts arranged for passing government officials and

622 guests; small gifts from Muslim traders at the big market in his domain; etc.

It is still customary that a son of the cheqa shum be appointed to his father's post after him, unless there is some specific reason for deciding otherwise. Thus the cheqa shum has been a major stabilizing factor in Amhara history, surviving warlords, feudal families, rebel governors, provincial dynasties. When Menelik II conquered Galla lands, he found it useful to appoint similar village headman, "qoro", from among the Galla. The Italians, too, during their brief conquest, maintained the office of the cheqa shum, to avoid chaotic conditions, only occasional and tangential reference is made to the cheqa shum, which in practice confirms him in his customary role.

Since the cheqa shum usually owns land in his domain, sometimes a woman, sole survivor of the family, is appointed cheqa shum, especially if she is a generous donor to the local church and thus has a powerful ally. In this case she will hold her office in "honorary" capacity, appointing a man to represent her when making the tours and in dealings with menfolk. But she will usually not appoint her own husband, because their private property is regarded as potentially separate (e.g. in case of ultimate divorce).

631 As indicated before, several cheqa shum, of a half-district (yämeketl wärädä) or a district (wärädä) are supervised by their superior, the lieutenant of the governor, often called "mislanē". These district super-

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

631 visors are in turn responsible to the governors of the sub-province, the "awraja gaj". It is customary that these officials be appointed from provincial nobility, of the lower grades, and this custom is still followed in the old-Amhara provinces, though not in Shoa where the central government has managed to place officers with modern elementary school education regardless of commoner origin.

[622 554] Even the çheqa shum, who is always a commoner--though owner of freehold "rest" land--has a claim to being regarded as a "telleq saw", a great man, in the local social sphere. For the higher officials and absentee landlords know that their administration and territorial organization are ultimately dependant on him, and they refrain from undermining his authority.

B. Urban Organization

632 The word for "town", "kätäma", really means "permanent camp", and points directly to its origin in the feudal social organization. When a feudal lord (high level, e.g. a "ras") became attached to one place, and was at peace for any length of time, he would order a large church to be built, creating or enlarging a church parish. Trails leading there would expand into caravan routes, and a large and varied "Saturday market" would develop. This would attract Muslim or even Arab wholesalers, who would be segregated or segregate themselves

693 694 If the quarrel is a civil matter, the curbstone judge usually acts merely as arbitrator ("aqoran"). He is rewarded by the loser, who has forfeited his "wager", usually with several "berellē" (glass bottles) of beer.

If, however, personal injury or some other criminal matter seems involved, or if no mutually satisfactory adjustment can be reached, the arbitrator may tie their togas together with a knot, and refer the matter to the cheqa shum.

693 622 The latter then sits as informal judge, to decide whether the matter should be referred to a regular formal judge, the "danya". Meanwhile he tries to arbitrate the case, with the power of his office as village headman lending him added prestige. In church-owned territory he may be a priest. Sometimes he is one of the local Confessors ("mänfäs agway"), particularly if it is a marital quarrel. Each of these offices lends the cheqa shum added prestige, for there is no formal separation of church and state organization at the base of the social pyramid. [779]

693 694 (2) The Indicting, Examining Judge. He is called "atbiya danya" (lit. handwashing judge), and his functions are broad, and vary between rural and town locale and between districts and regions. Sometimes the cheqa shum performs this function himself. In town, the atbiya danya may sit under a sycamore at the market, so that any tradesman or purchaser can complain to him about unfair weights or attempted theft. He can issue an immediate "fetem" an injunction to cease and desist.

lived in passing and upon which he could levy purveyance. His passage was an affair of pomp, in which important ladies had to be considered and a retinue taken, which might swell to many hundreds of soldiers and servants with all their families, slaves, and transport animals. Such journeys were veritable expeditions, not to be undertaken lightly. A journey right across the country might take several weeks, and in parts the rains made travel laborious or impossible for some five months of the year. The difficulty of communication gave the governor an independence of which he made full use. Governors of ancient divisions with a tradition of autonomy and governors from the royal family were generally allowed to rule with little interference. In this century the main provincial capitals were connected with Addis Ababa by telephone and this, with aeroplanes, which were just beginning to come into use before 1935, were the first threats to the isolation of the governors, which has since, in most parts, been so greatly diminished by the Italian roads. The Emperor had his agents who kept a watch upon governors and reported upon their doings; this kind of espionage was a highly developed system in Ethiopia. The governors on their side kept representatives in the capital. But this did nothing to overcome what several observers have remarked as the besetting sin of Ethiopian administration, the refusal to take any constructive responsibility. Governors of the old school were mainly concerned with the conservation of their own power, the collection of their tribute, and the fulfilment of their military duties. It would have been quite outside their range of thought to initiate new ideas of reform or to put down time-honoured abuses. Some of the governors spent much of their time at Addis Ababa and their deputies tended to be even more conservative in their use of authority than their masters.

Although the emphasis here is upon administration, it must not be forgotten that the governor was historically and in Ethiopian eyes primarily a high military officer and his civil duties were no more than the necessary accompaniment of his command. He had—as was shown anew in 1935—to raise and lead his provincial army in war. Some description has, however, already been given of the army, and there will be no need to discuss it further in this chapter except in the next section in relation to land tenure.

THE VILLAGE CHIEF

We have seen that by 1935 it was rare for a great local landed potentate to hold the highest provincial office; in most instances this was held by the Emperor's nominees. But this was not the only link the Emperor

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
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claimed with the provinces. It was at a lower level that his official hierarchy was, in theory, in continuous contact with the regional and hereditary element. The governors' deputies and their assistants in the still smaller districts might or might not be local men, but when we come to the heads of villages or groups of villages we find that the leader and representative of the people and the lowest agent of the Emperor and his governor were united in the person of the *chiqa-shum*.

This officer was universal in Tigré, Amhara, and most of Galla country though in the latter this title was not always used. Because of his close association with the customary agrarian societies there were local variations in his status and duties. In general character and importance, even though the analogy is not exact, the *chiqa-shum* occupied something like the position of the Elizabethan justice of the peace. In his office central and local authority met. He was responsible to the governor's district chief for the proper performance by his own community of their duties and especially for their payments to the proper authorities of tithe and tax and of dues in kind and labour. He was the judge to whom, if wayside arbitration failed, the litigants would first apply. He would be present at local weddings; would preside at meetings of the village council, and would be especially concerned with all transfers or allocations of land and disputes about it. He would see that orders from the higher authorities were proclaimed by a crier in the village.

According to an Ethiopian account he is 'the officer of the district, living upon the soil as one joined to it'.[1] He is the agent of the Emperor. 'He will be an Amhara and may accuse even the Governor. If a man touches or strikes him, he (i.e. the striker) will not pay compensation, but all his goods will be confiscated.'[2] Coulbeaux defines him as 'le maire de la commune . . . tuteur, père même'. He manages the affairs of the village like his own, and his patriarchal authority is sacred. He is generally the genealogical chief of the community, and calls the village council together under a tree.[3] Certainly these village chiefs, representing continuity of tradition and the sedentary agricultural life, were the stabilizing factor in a system in which changing governors, roving armies, and a distant Emperor played the more dramatic, but often the more superficial, parts. This especially struck Plowden. 'There is in each village', he wrote, 'one hereditary officer that cannot be displaced on any pretence; and it is this institution alone that preserves some appearance of order in the absence of all written documents, amidst the whirl of revolutions and the rapid succession of dynasties and gover-

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 42. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 184. [3] Coulbeaux, vol. 1, pp. 35–6.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
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622 nors.'[1] An interesting confirmation of this comes from a later date: the British minister in 1939 reported that after two years of bitter experience the Italians found they could not run the country without the co-operation of the Ethiopians at the village level, and were trying to restore the village organization.

The Emperor claimed to appoint the *chiqa-shum* but we may assume that in this and in the other matters discussed in this chapter he intervened to do so when and where he had the power. The *shum* was generally too small a man to attract imperial attention and a strong governor would, without doubt, play his part in the matter. According to Krapf the *shum* was appointed by the governor at the request of the villagers [435] and paid twenty pieces of rock salt, then valued at one dollar, for the appointment which he held only for a year.[2] The choice, whether made by Emperor or governor, was clearly limited by the character of the office; its value depended upon the local status and representative capacity of the holder. In some communities the appointment might be for a period or even for life, but it was also a widespread custom in the north for the office to rotate yearly amongst the leading men of a few families, generally those whose prestige rested upon their descent from the family which founded the group. There were, of course, a number of privileges and perquisites in the form of gifts for the *shum*. There were differences in his official rewards; in some areas he got no more than exemption from taxes. In a vivid Ethiopian comment, 'he . . . pays tribute only with his legs, running up, and down to carry the orders of the Government'.[3] In other parts, however, it appears that he retained some proportion of the taxes he collected for the government. It would be very valuable if further investigation could be made into this obscure but all-important office and into the position which, after all that has happened since 1935, it holds to-day.

[1] Hotten, p. 157.
[2] Krapf, J. L., and Isenberg, C. W., *Journals*, 1843, p. 280.
[3] Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

impressions conveyed by much of the literature on Ethiopia, is not a normal ecological unit in Amhara society.

Each homestead gives the appearance of self-sufficiency and autonomy, but it is bound to a wider social context in a number of ways. While satisfying most of its consumption needs by its own efforts, every household depends on the market for certain items. The highland peasants must go to market for their chili, onions, peppers, hops, and cotton; while lowland peasants must barter for barley and sheep there. Salt and foreign fabrics must be imported from afar, and iron and clay products must be bought from specialists who bring their wares. Limited needs for currency—chiefly for rifles and, since 1942, taxes—are also met at the market.

The markets normally are held once a week. Every homestead is within walking distance of at least one market; though often the trip may take several hours, at times the greater part of a day. Markets in the same region are often scheduled on different days, so that, for example, the family which misses the one five hours to the north on Saturday can catch another four hours to the south on Tuesday. The virtual absence of roads throughout the countryside makes travel to market slow and tedious, but wealthier peasants nonetheless manage to transport quantities of grain and livestock to the provincial capitals for better prices and a wider selection of consumers' goods.

The household is linked to a wider world politically as well as economically. By providing tithes, revenues, military service, and corvée labor, the peasant has traditionally been obliged to support an extensive political hierarchy. In return for this he has received an organization for defending the country against enemies, and a structure of legitimate authority sufficient to maintain order and settle disputes.

The peasant's relations with this political hierarchy have been mediated by the office of *chĭqā shum*, a district headman. This office is circulated, usually annually, among a small number of men whose eligibility is based on their ownership of certain pieces of land. As the land passes from father to son, so does the eligibility for being *chĭqā shum*.

Traditionally the *chĭqā shum* was a role of considerable importance. It carried the duties of tax collection, adjudication, promulgation of official decrees, supervision of occasional work projects, levying of men for military service, and officiating at civil marriages and divorces. Through his work the *chĭqā shum* received a variety of fees and bribes. In cases of flagrant misbehavior the local people were able to dismiss him from office. The reorganization of provincial administration since 1942 has deprived the *chĭqā shum* of many of his former powers, but the office still exists and plays a modest role in peasant life.

The district over which a *chĭqā shum* has authority is the closest thing to a village unit among the Amhara. It is usually coterminous with the area sur-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 621 794 rounding a local church, and therefore "parish" may be the more appropriate term for it than village. The *chĭqā shum* and the local church authorities work closely on occasion, particularly in connection with the construction and maintenance of church buildings.

*565 79 182 The church represents the third main link between the peasant hamlet and the broader Abyssinian life. As the peasant depends on the local market to mediate between his production unit and the external economy, and on the *chĭqā shum* to mediate between his domestic polity and the higher political authorities, so he depends on the local clergy to mediate between his home culture and the "high culture" of Abyssinia as embodied in the institutions of the Orthodox Church.

The peasant supports the church by following its main ritual requirements and by contributing, according to his means, a certain quantity of grain each year. If the peasant works land owned by the church, a considerable part of his produce is transmitted automatically to individual priests, or gifts are offered to the church according to the occasion. In return, the church symbolizes for him the integrity of his moral order and provides moral support during personal crisis.

*565 Such, in broad outline, is the structural setting of peasant life among the Amhara.

THE WORLD OF ACTIVITY

The Daily Round

*565 512 [462] [252] Work begins in the peasant's home well before daybreak. His wife or maidservant rises with the first cockcrow to grind grain. It is pitch dark as she feels her way across the earthen floor and begins to push and pull a large flat stone over little heaps of barley, wheat, or *tĕff*.

An hour or two later cold light seeps in through cracks in the door and, if it is in bad repair, the thatched roof. The noises of chickens and livestock become more audible, and the rest of the household begins to stir. The man [182] of the house starts his day by reciting a prayer or, if he has some education, by reading a passage from some sacred text. Then he or one of the boys takes [231] [462] the oxen and cows out for breakfast, to a pile of hay in the yard or a spot of pasture rich with grass. Donkeys, mules, and perhaps horses are also sent to graze.

[372] One of the women pokes the embers that spent the night under a blanket of ash. She blows them into flame through a bamboo pipe, filling the room with smoke and her eyes with tears. Over the fire she sets a clay pot to warm [262] [252] up leftover pepper sauce. The peasant sits on a sheepskin spread over the clay bench that adjoins the wall. Water is poured from a gourd for him to wash [352] [515] [264] his hands, and *ĭnjarā* and sauce are brought for his breakfast. He eats by himself, slowly, pondering the work for the day.